

THE ORANGE COUNTY BETA REGISTER

Adult education advocates meet Friday

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2010-04-29 16:11:47

COSTA MESA – Proponents of an adult education program are hosting a town hall meeting Friday to address the Newport-Mesa Unified School District's recent cuts.

The meeting will be held from 9 to 11 a.m. at the Neighborhood Community Center, 1845 Park Ave.

In February, the School District – staring down a \$13.5 million budget gap and more than 240 teacher positions at stake – anticipated axing much of its near \$850,000 adult education program, leaving intact the high school diploma lab and GED programs next year.

Program advocates, however, said significant cuts to the program would adversely affect people living on the west side of Costa Mesa who used the classes to improve their English, learn computer skills and work toward citizenship.

"What you're doing is helping people get their high school diplomas, and we have a certified program for computer skills to train people for the job," said Gary Miller, a candidate for the Orange County Board of Education whose wife is a teacher in the program. "It all has an important contribution back into the community."

District officials have since proposed adding back 12 ESL classes, said Becky Bishai, director of Student Services for the school district. The courses are offered during the day and night.

The district would allocate about \$500,000 for the program, which has 1,600 students enrolled, Bishai said. The number of adult education teaching positions affected is unclear.

"We believe we'll be able to fully accommodate all parents who have children in the district," Bishai said.

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